Collaboration, capacity and a 'complex' middle tier

Professor Mark Hadfield

IPDA International Conference

Birmingham 2013

Prof Mark Hadfield

www.cardiff.ac.uk

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD

The middle tier

- What is it?

- Why should we be concerned about its' development?

- How do developments in the UK, and elsewhere, affect the nature of professional development required by the system?

The middle tier

National Government

Local Government

Schools
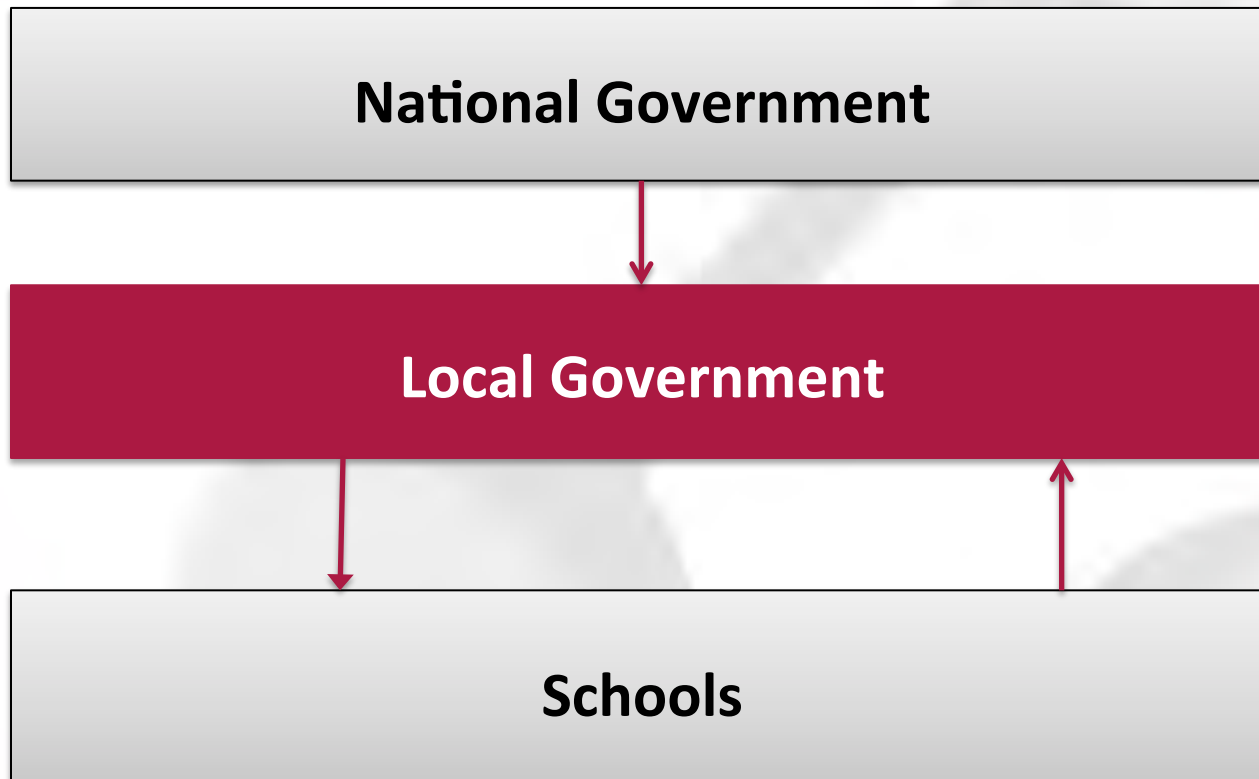
The underpinnings of a more complex middle tier

Debates around:

- Bottom up v top down

- Autonomy v collaboration

- Prescription v professionalism

- Collaboration v competition

Policy shifts include notions of:

- `new localism'

- `partnership culture'

- `Third Way' governance

Tri level reform

An era of system, or tri-level, reform in education that stresses the need for sustainable change to:
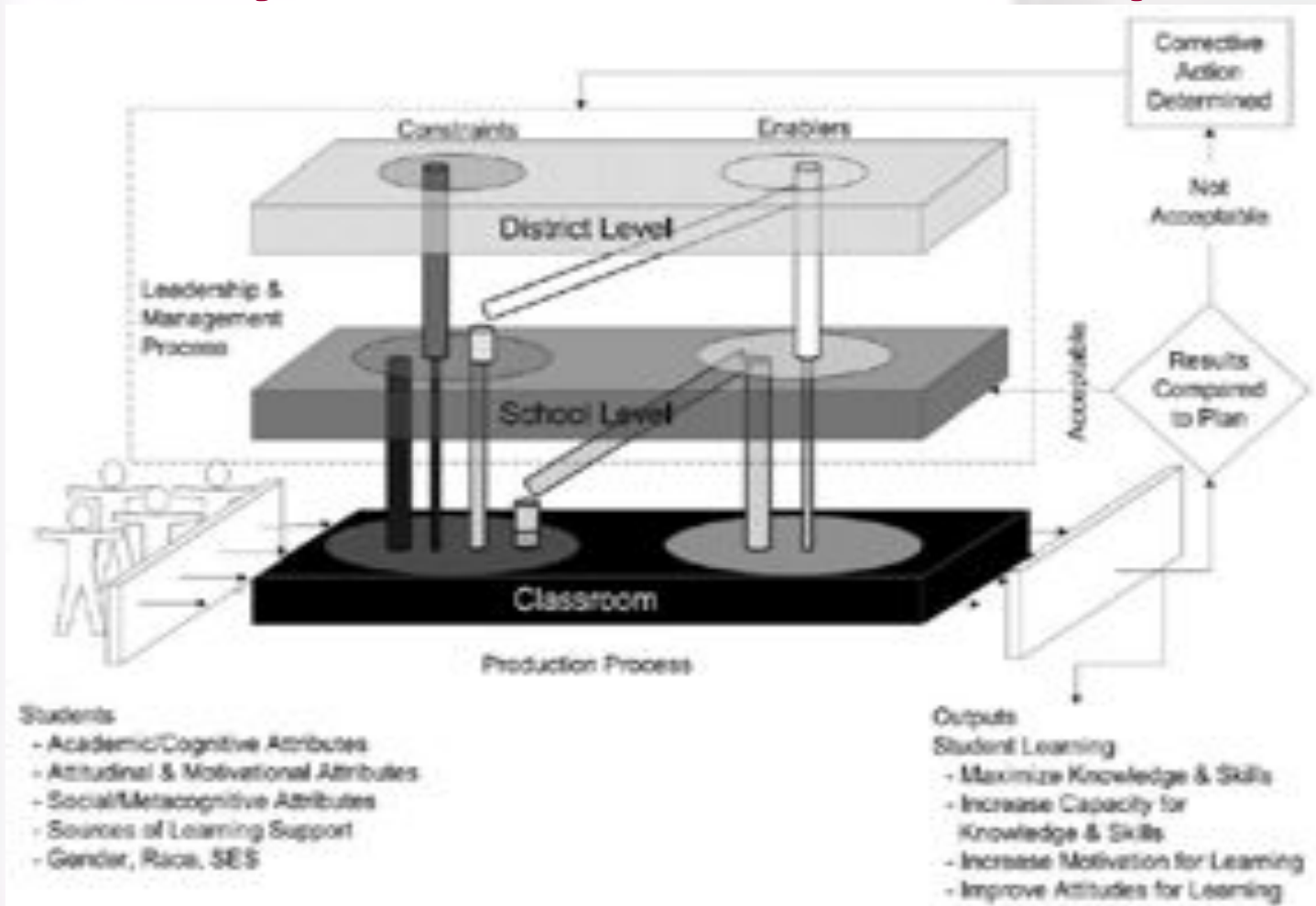
- Be both broad and deep, in order to go to scale

- Affect both internal and external factors.

- Have multiple actors working at different levels

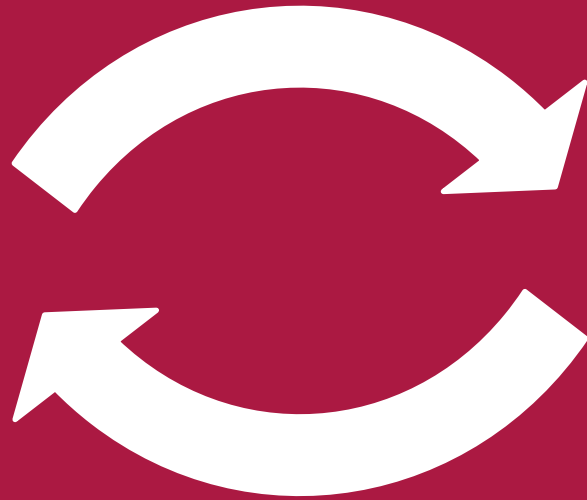**It is less clear as to what combinations of key factors lead to successful reform**

CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL
CAERDYD

Wales:
A 'simple' middle tier

National Policy

Local Authorities and Local Authority Education Consortia

Networks of Schools

Networks of Classroom

Community

SEF, 2008 Welsh Government

So why is the middle tier important?
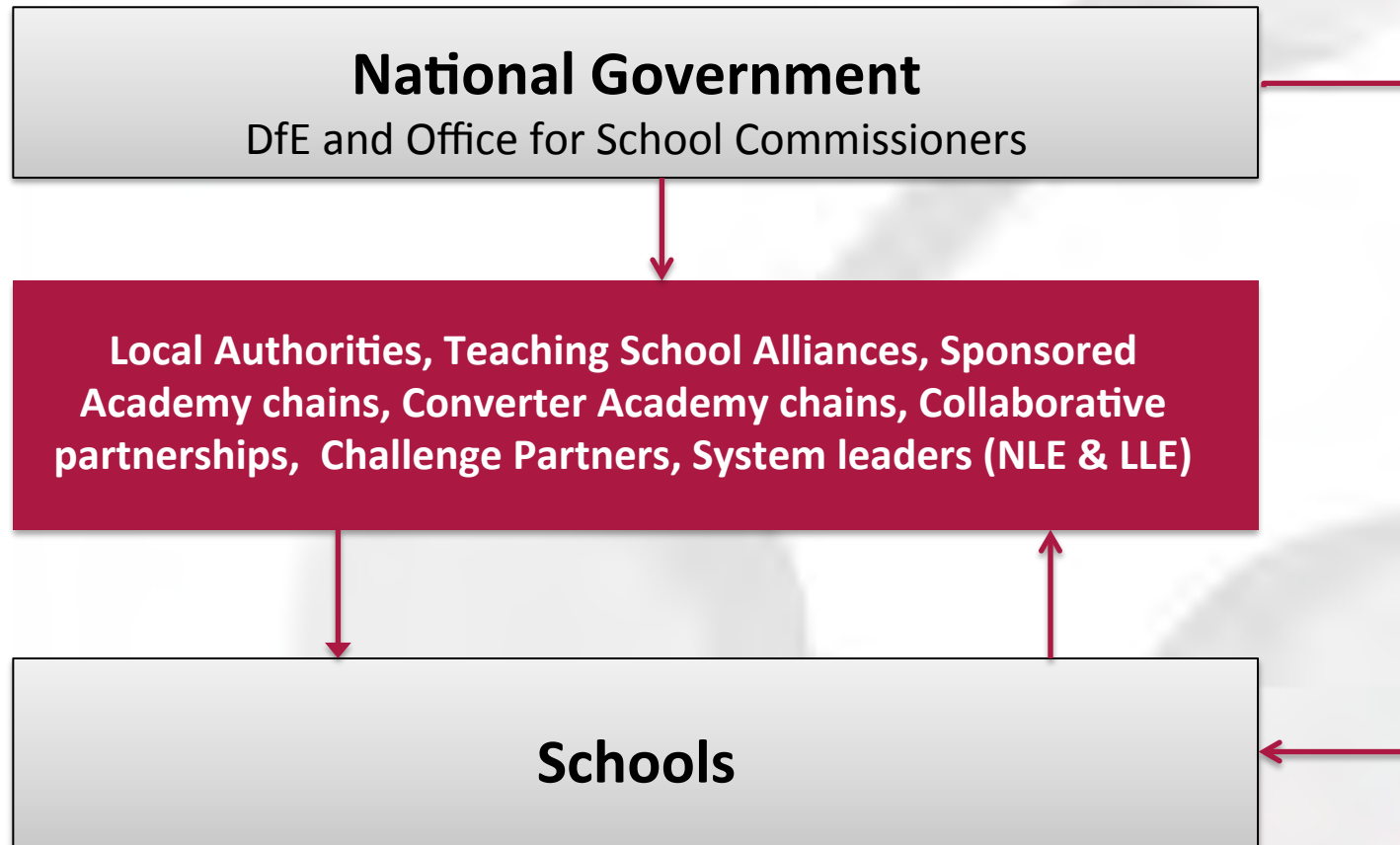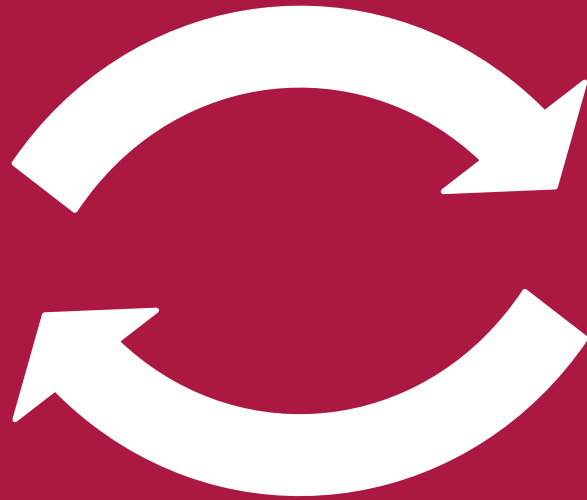

(Resnick, 2009)

Prof Mark Hadfield

www.cardiff.ac.uk

A self-improving school system

It has long been known that the most powerful influences on teachers are other teachers, but policies have rarely built on the fact. The best way of exploiting this phenomenon is through regular, face-to-face encounters among professionals that focus on the improvement of teaching and learning. Under the direction of system leaders clusters of schools are the simplest way of maximising inter-school professional development as the main driver of a SISS.

(Hargreaves 2010)

England: a complex middle tier

National Government
DfE and Office for School Commissioners

Local Authorities, Teaching School Alliances, Sponsored Academy chains, Converter Academy chains, Collaborative partnerships, Challenge Partners, System leaders (NLE & LLE)

Schools

CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL
CAERDYⱮ

A self-improving school system

Once established, a SISS potentially reduces the need for extensive bureaucratic, top-down systems of monitoring to check on school quality, the imposition of improvement strategies that are relatively insensitive to local context, with out-of-school in-service courses not tailored to individual professional needs, and external, last-ditch interventions to remedy schools in difficulties, all of which are very costly and often only partially successful.
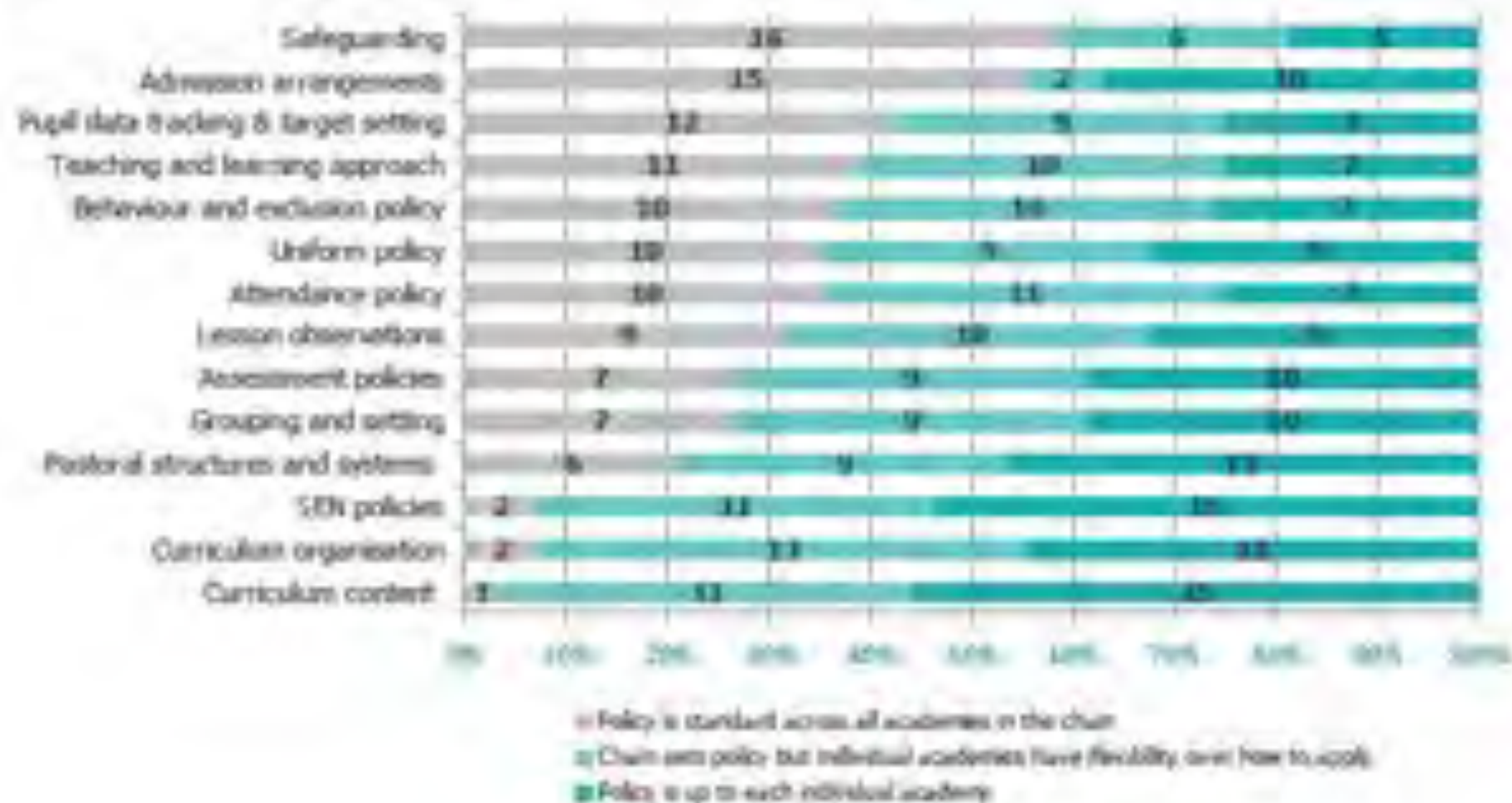
(Hargreaves 2010)

A highly variable middle tier?

(Hill et al 2012, NCSL)

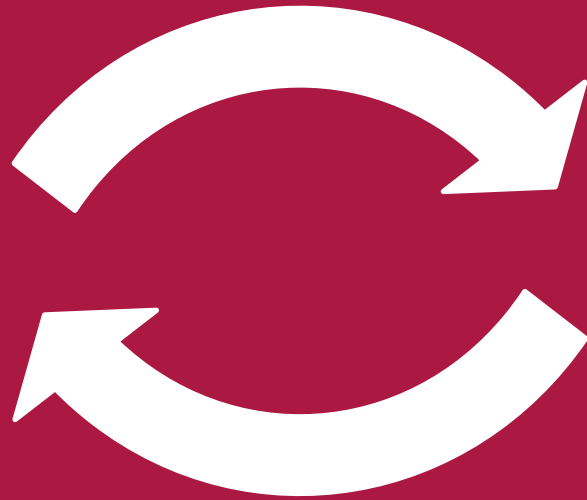# A highly uncoordinated middle tier?

Figure 10.2: The application of policies and practices across sponsored academy chains

Bar chart showing the application of policies and practices across sponsored academy chains:

Policy/Practice	Policy is standard across all academies in the chain	Chain sets policy but individual academies have flexibility over how to adopt	Policy is up to each individual academy
Safeguarding	16	6	5
Admission arrangements	15	2	10
Pupil data tracking & target setting	12	5	
Teaching and learning approach	11	10	7
Behaviour and exclusion policy	10	10	
Uniform policy	10	5	
Attendance policy	10	11	
Lesson observations	8	10	
Assessment policies	7	9	10
Grouping and setting	7	9	10
Pastoral structures and systems	6	9	11
SEN policies	2	11	15
Curriculum organisation	2	13	12
Curriculum content	1	11	

Legend:
- Policy is standard across all academies in the chain
- Chain sets policy but individual academies have flexibility over how to adopt
- Policy is up to each individual academy

A self-improving school system

In a self-improving school system, more control and responsibility passes to the local level in a spirit of mutual aid between school leaders and their colleagues, who are morally committed to imaginative and sustainable ways of achieving more ambitious and better outcomes.

As in chaos and complexity theory, however, below the surface is a new kind of order in which schools working together in networks have aligned their continuing professional development and their leadership development, and woven these into their school development and improvement plans, both for each school and for other schools in the cluster.

(Hargreaves 2010)

Is England unusual?

- The rhetoric of a 'self improving system' is appealing to policy makers who are either facing cutbacks or prefer 'small' governments.

- The appeal of greater local and professional 'empowerment' and 'autonomy' is leading to a range of experiments with non-bureaucratic accountability structures.

- Increasing recognition by practitioners that a wide spread recession resulting in less central and local government support means that:

'we are the system'

An international example: Western Australia

- Gives certain schools greater autonomy from the middle tier by becoming Independent Public Schools

- Condenses 14 school districts into 8 regions

- In each region a number of school networks up to 75 across the State, are created using generic criteria

- Funding for each network equivalent to providing a 0.2 network principal

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL CAERDYdD

An international example: Western Australia

This new structure is in line with the Government's focus on empowering local school communities. Principals, their staff and local communities are being given greater control over the direction of their schools and how services are used to benefit students. The creation of school networks in education regions is an important part of this development.

The majority of support services essential to schools – such as school psychologists, participation officers and curriculum support – will move to schools or networks of schools. This will give schools greater capacity and flexibility to make decisions about how best to use those services and resources.
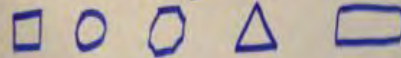
DfE (2010) Education networks and regions: New ways of supporting schools. WA

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL CAERDYÐ

Pictures of practice

Churchlands

Purpose: to fascilitate opportunities for positive educational outcomes for all students and staff.

People: equity: greater access for all

▢ ◯ ⬡ △ ▭

[Proce]sses: Collaborative
Targetted + data drive[n]
Flexible and adaptable
Optional buy in

[Struc]tures: termly meetings
regular communication + sup[port]
collaborations homogeneous
heterogeneous
macro + micro

Churchlands Network

- 15 schools with 3 network groups within the network. Smaller groups est. for specific purposes.
- Initially an 'in house' skills matrix of each school was developed.
- Teacher development opportunities for prospective level 3 teachers' has been highly successful with a high success rate.
- Leadership training opportunities have increased confidence + trust within the network.
- High school transition program has been successful with the goal to extend this collaboration to curriculum.
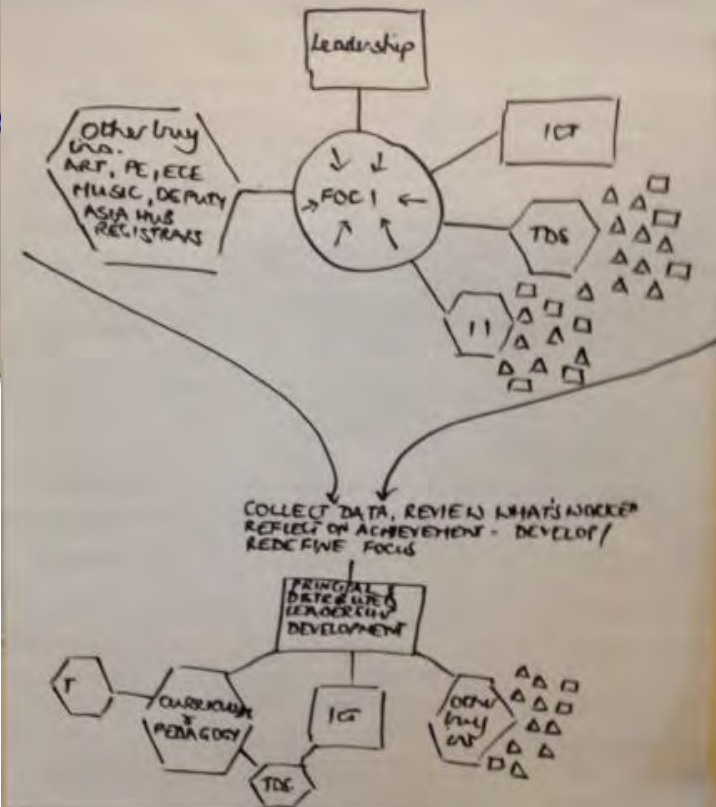
The future:
- ICT is going to be an area of focus, with the primary schools aligning more closely with the SHS in regards to hardware and financial arrangements.
- focus on distributed leadership with an emphasis on providing teachers with leadership opportunities
- focus on DP's - in developing a common cause, which has been problematic considering the diversity of their roles.

CHURCHLANDS

Bunbury South

Second Year
1st Year Problems caused by establishment structure

Last 12 months
No Real Purpose

But Agreed Focus
Aust Curriculum
Transition
Coll support

Re Engaging the Group
Strong Connection
But need processes to produce Strong Network.

- Cockburn Fremantle Public Schools' Netw

Purpose
- Revisit Purpose, publish it o
  emails, facebook, letterheads

Pupil
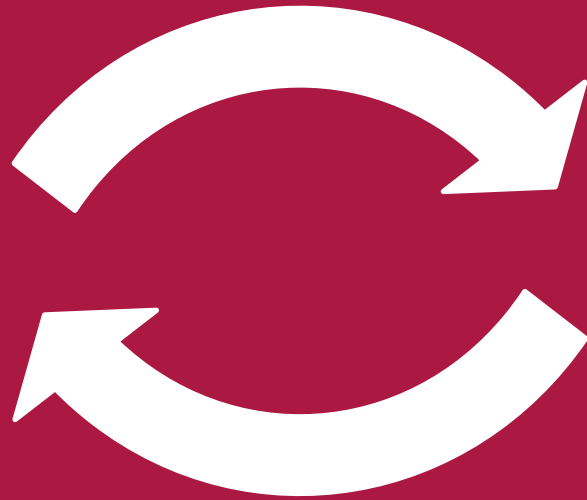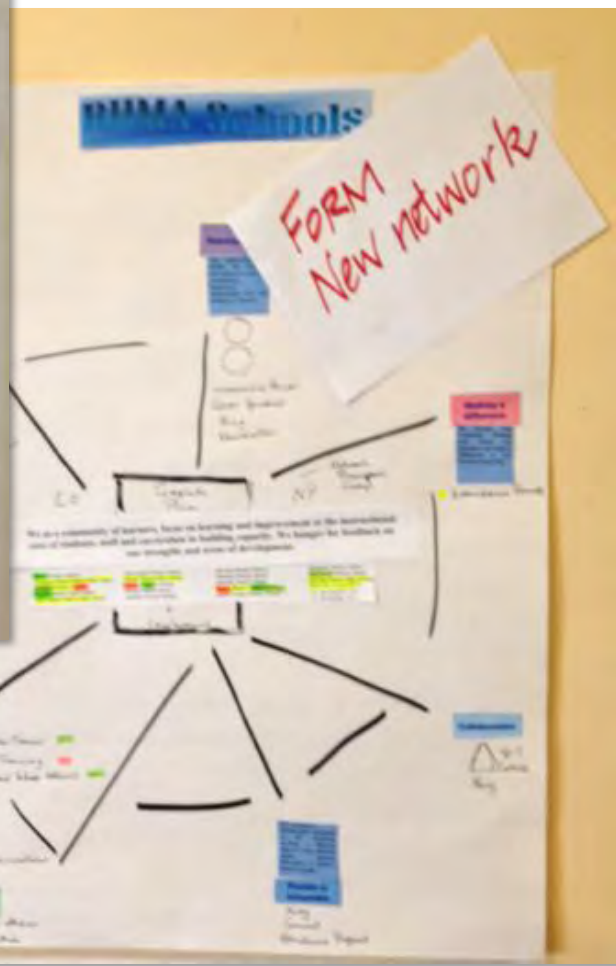- Enrolling other networks PL.....
- Engage all participants in

Process
- Provide opportunities to bring in informal leaders to lead process.
- Develop a strategic plan

PUMA Schools

FORM New network

A self-improving school system

Without nodal system leaders at its heart, there is a serious risk that a cluster-based system would merely recycle mediocrity and affirm complacency, or would simply collapse because the headteachers lack partnership competence and/or there is too little pay-off from the partnership.

(Hargreaves 2010)

Ten characteristics of an effective middle tier?

1.

Strong political leadership at a regional/city level

2.

High-calibre leaders and reformers

3.

A single centre with authority to act

4.

Strategies, including professional development, aligned around a shared vision

5.

Raising student expectations

6.

Explaining and engaging all parts of the system in the reform

7.

Outcomes based accountability framework

8.

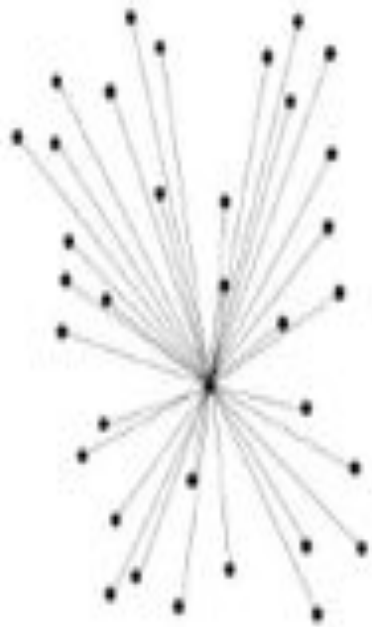# Sustained reform efforts

9.

Targeting of schools needing most improvement
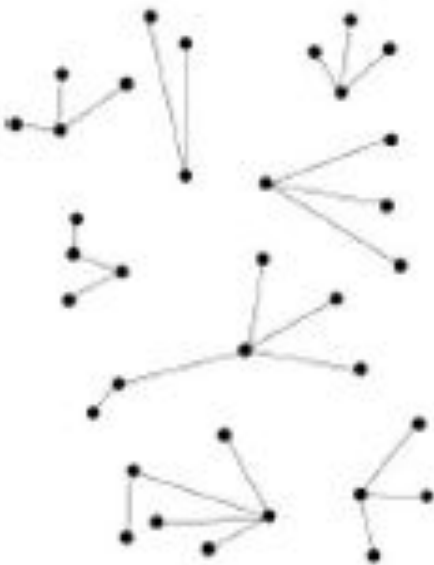
10.
Additional financial resources

The middle tier as a network structure

Centralized

Decentralised

Fragmented

Distributed

What kind of middle tier do we need to avoid?

A worn safety net

Connected but not empowered

Networked but not communicating

IF..........

We accept that a new middle tier will be emerging then what form of professional learning can overcome some of the issues it will present and take advantage of the possibilities it could create?

New forms of 'connectivist' or 'connective' professional learning

A new form of social pedagogy for professional learning that is responsive to the fragmented, networked, and distributed nature of the profession and the knowledge it holds and creates.

What sort of connective professional capacity does a fragmented system require?

- Leadership focused on professional learning that is multi-level and vertically 'nested'.

- Emphasis on the lateral transfer, and creation, of practice, within, between, and across schools.

- Ability to scale up practice in a sustained fashion that recognizes the segmented nature of the local system.

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL CAERDY�

Connective Professional Learning

CPL pedagogy would therefore be concerned with:

- Developing individuals' ability to construct, traverse and lead networks and groups.

- Utilizing networks of learning relationships to transfer, and create new, professional practices

- Building a collective sense of professional identity in order to facilitate collective action and resistance

- Placing different forms of theory, practice and data into critical dialectic relationships.

CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL
CAERDYᵭ

A Connected Local Authority?

The Learning Exchange:
A connective structure?
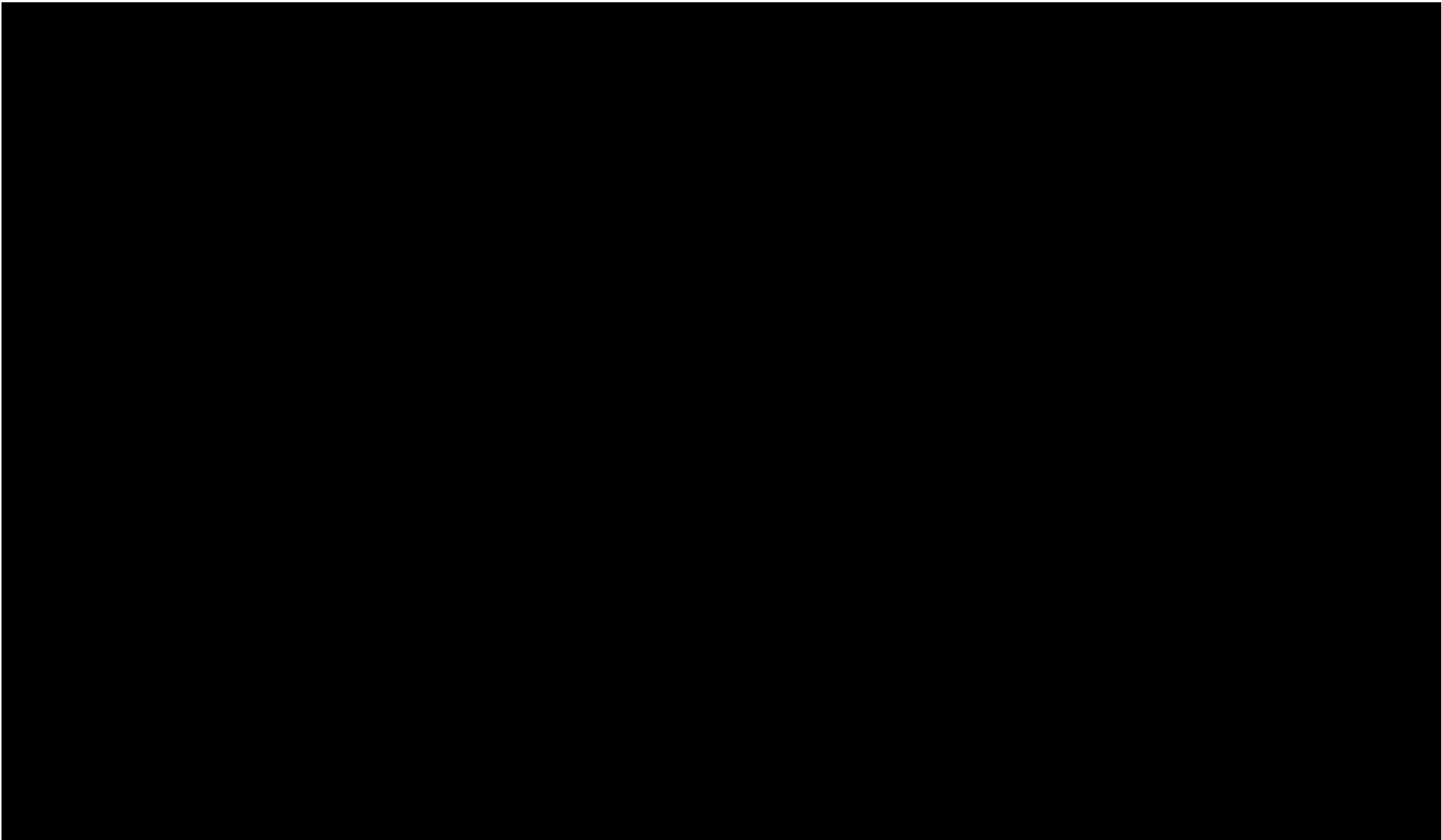
Key characteristics

- **Reciprocity:** Putting in as well as taking out

- **Moral purpose:** Common good

- **Trust:** Competence, status, identity

- **Mutual knowledge:** Not just common knowledge

- **Brokerage:** Individual and systemic approaches

The Masters in Educational Practice: A connected programme?

- Available to all eligible NQTs in Wales

- Currently has over 800 students enrolled (approx 55% of eligible students)

- Approximately 80% of them are on temporary contract of less than a year

- Involving 4 universities, 120 external mentors and over 500 schools across Wales

Key characteristics

- **Moral purpose:** Overcoming impact of poverty on pupil achievement

- **Learning groups/networks:** Regional cross-phase groups supported by a mentor, self managing virtual interest groups, co-construction partnerships

- **Learning relationships:** Peer, mentor based, enquiry focused

- **Practice transfer and development:** Collaborative enquiry based with a requirement to share emergent practice

Leadership of a more complex middle tier?

- Currently too focused upon adapted forms of school leadership (system leaders)

- A fragmented middle tier has led to a plethora of middle leadership development programmes within chains and networks

- Relatively few local authorities are able to maintain the capacity for effective brokerage and alternative local structures are not emerging